

RED & ANARCHIST UNITY

The purpose of the Red & Anarchist Action Network, if it must be summarized, is to concretely unite the far-left (including those radicals who consider themselves to be outside of the bourgeois-political spectrum) in the hopes of forming something powerful enough to positively change every aspect of our lives.

RAAN was born over the Internet as a group of libertarian websites (and their readers) who wished to form a collaborative alliance through which we could build new paths and attain new success in our struggle for a better world.

The (anti-state) communist and anarchist movements, often as a result of ignorance, confusion, or historical conditions, have for too long remained separate. Often allied, but not united; and at times even distrustful of each other. And yet history has shown us that when they *are* united, they form the most penetrating and complete analysis of the world we live in, as well as the most promising and realistic vision for changing it.

As is often the case, the solution to a problem one is faced with may be revealed during the process of simply confronting it. Confident in this, we sought first to unite anarchists and communists in discussion, using the Internet as a facilitating tool. This was done prior to any statement of purpose, and the description of our group was never clarified beyond "anarchist and communist unity". As a result of this strategy, comradesly discussion, solidarity, and often, debate had been going on amongst those involved with RAAN for almost three months before the idea of a written statement of principles was even brought up.

We are certain that this base of discourse will now serve to make our founding document much stronger than it would have otherwise been.

COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION

Being an alliance comprised of communists and anarchists, it is essential that RAAN both condemn all forms of hierarchy and organize itself in a collective manner that embodies our hopes for autonomous organization.

When we began, RAAN was brought to life through an Internet message board, which provided us with a practical way to conduct discussions and also to bring together many different currents of thought from all over the world.

Unlike an organization of the traditional "Left", where a militant's role may be limited only to recruiting new membership and selling a party newspaper, (the contents of which she probably had no say in) the online forum was able to give every member a voice and a direct channel to air their opinions. RAAN participants were able to choose their own levels of involvement in the project, and influence it through contributions to a variety of discussions and efforts. Comrades involved in the organization need not wait for any "Central Committee" to call a convention in order to be exposed to new ideas, as the continual discussion of relevant issues - and the mutual learning that accompanies it - is always occurring and indeed, driving, the network. This is exceptionally important to remember as we begin to organize in the "real world".

In terms of the technical operations and functions of the network, RAAN holds a certain affinity towards what has come to be known as "The Platform". *The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, written in 1926 by a group of exiled Russian anarchists, has proven to be a valuable addition to the ongoing development of non-hierarchical organizations. This does not mean, however, that RAAN is a "platformist" group. To chain the network to a single theoretical basis would be to simultaneously exclude ourselves from whole tendencies of anarchist and communist thought that, assuming that we refer only to the anti-authoritarian variety, all have things to contribute.

That said, we strive to build an association of radicals that can function physically as well as formally when it has to. By "formally", we mean nothing more menacing than to simply allow the participants to easily communicate/cooperate with each other. So with this in mind, the four organizational points upon which The Platform rests are;

Theoretical Unity

"All activity by the General Union, both overall and in its details, should be in perfect concord with the theoretical principles professed by the Union."

This fundamental point of anarchist organization is embodied in this pamphlet; which seeks to provide the network with a general concept of principles. Through this we establish the purpose of RAAN and its actions, which are decided by all participants.

Furthermore, we believe that theoretical unity can only be achieved through collective discussion, the very foundation upon which our network is based.

Tactical Unity or The Collective Method of Action

"A common tactical line in the movement is of decisive importance for the existence of the organization and the whole movement: it removes the disastrous effect of several tactics in opposition to one another, it concentrates all the forces of the movement, gives them a common direction leading to a fixed objective."

We agree with this, and we do not.

The "common tactical line" of the Red & Anarchist Action Network is for those involved to engage in only the activities that they believe to be personally fulfilling and worthwhile. This approach is the only logical way to unite our different tendencies, and will inevitably lead to what we see as a glorious variety of tactics.

Collective Responsibility

"...The entire Union will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of each member; in the same way, each member will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of the Union as a whole."

For more on how this may or may not directly apply to the daily life of the Network, see the section entitled "Action".

Federalism

"...The federalist type of anarchist organization, while recognizing each member's rights to independence, free opinion, individual liberty and initiative, requires each member to undertake fixed organizational duties, and demands execution of communal decisions."

It is on this principle that we find ourselves most divided. To be clear, RAAN is not a formal organization to which one "belongs", but a banner under which we associate with others and carry out actions that we judge as being worthwhile to our immediate lives. Nevertheless, the successful operation of the network as an organized grouping of like-minded and cooperating activists does depend on our ability to act as such.

All participants in the project are expected to have their own ideas and personal stances on any number of issues. These opinions will, in conjunction with the opinions of the other members, ultimately form a unified position around which the network may rally; this pamphlet is a first step in that direction. Members of RAAN are expected to, *when speaking for or representing the organization*, act accordingly and present the common position.

The remainder of this pamphlet should be read with the above points in mind, as they are the guidelines by which we shape our collective organization and act in its name.

COMMUNISM

"We use the word 'communism' as shorthand - despite the likelihood that it will confuse some people who will think that we are talking about the so-called former 'communist' countries or the communist parties associated with or supporting those countries - because we don't have a better word. The political currents we feel a degree of affinity with have called themselves many sorts of things - libertarian-communists, anarchist-communists, left-communists, autonomists - what could broadly be described as the 'ultra-left'." - John Gray

"Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from premises now in existence." - Karl Marx

The position of the Red & Anarchist Action Network towards communism (that is, our understanding of it as a fundamental principle of RAAN) can best be summarized in an article written by "Jeff" (also known as commie zero zero in some circles) for Issue 11 of the anarchist publication *Red and Black Notes*. The relevant sections of the article, titled **Five Theses on Anarchism and Communism**, are reprinted below;

1. I feel the 'anarchist tradition' has had a tendency to engage in 'power reductionism,' just as the 'Marxist tradition' has had a tendency to engage in 'economic reductionism.' The trouble with this approach is that, in both Marxism and anarchism, such reductionism has had a tendency to limit the ability to make an analysis of the whole problem we face; it tends to create a situation wherein the culprit is sought in only one area of the whole problem.

2. Historically, we can say from our current point of view, this approach has turned out to be advantageous in that, generally speaking, they have analyzed the two major seemingly distinct sides of the capitalist system: on one side there is a movement of people analyzing power structures, the state, etc.; on the other side there is a movement of people analyzing economic structures, the class system, etc. These two sides have often overlapped (i.e. class struggle anarchists and council communists), but they have also often stood bitterly opposed for various reasons, some well founded some not. However, we are now facing, as Marx basically predicted, the globalization of capital, and thus it is high time a truly communist perspective emerged, utilizing both sides of the analysis, bringing them up to date, and making them a starting point for the development of a multi-faceted and open-ended analysis of the whole. I feel that only through such a unification is a truly revolutionary theoretical behavior possible.

3. In most of the world, however, we face a serious problem in using the word 'communist.' Due in part to the propaganda of the ruling-class, based on Leninist deviations, this word has become synonymous with state-controlled capitalism, and the totalitarian tendencies and structures therein. Thus, people have thought of several adjectives to use to modify the term, so that it takes on its true character: "anti-state", "libertarian", "anarchist", "free", "autonomist", etc. This hyphenation is good for shorthand when there isn't the time to explain that one is "not that kind of communist", or that "what people normally call communism isn't really communism in any way, shape or form."

4. There is *no such thing* as 'authoritarian communism', nor an 'authoritarian communist.' As the root of the word communism suggests, communism must have at its heart communal activity. In other words activity, free from the constraints of authoritarianism, in which each person is involved directly and equally. Thus, 'authoritarian communists' (Leninists, Trotskyists, Stalinists, Maoists, Bolsheviks, etc.) *are not communists at all*. Their ideas, based as they are in the capitalist social relation of hierarchies, which culminate in the state, have only reproduced in the former Soviet Union, China, etc., capitalism in a state-controlled form.

5. Communism, due to its anti-authoritarian nature, means the destruction of the state. Even Marx, from whom Leninists and others claim to take their cue, knew this fact. Thus it is unnecessary to modify the word communism with such adjectives as anarchist, libertarian, anti-state, free, autonomist, etc. Communism includes all of these when understood in its true meaning. Unfortunately, we face a situation in which the deliberate obscuring of the term by the ruling-classes and their various states, based in the deviations perpetuated by Leninists and others, forces us to use these redundant words to emphasize what we stand for. Thus it is really important as part of theoretical and propaganda work to undermine the ruling-class/Leninist misuse of the word and re-appropriate 'communism' for its proper use. However, among us are people who identify as anarchist, libertarian Marxist, council communist, just communist, or none of these terms. But we are, and must be, united by (as far as we understand it at this point) truly communist (anti-)politics.

Emphasis has been added by RAAN. The full work, which includes the above as well as a quick introduction by Jeff, can be found at http://www.infoshop.org/news5/red_and_black.html

Written later by the same author;

Marx understood 'communism' to be the conscious and unconscious struggle against alienation and for community. Which, when drawn further, means that 'communism' is not some utopia to be gained far into the future, but is embodied now in the conscious and unconscious struggles we make to de-alienate ourselves. And since capitalism (and class society in general) is intrinsically alienating (due to its inherent hierarchies, exchange-mediations, etc.), these struggles necessarily bring us into conflict with it and lay the basis for a possible, new post-capitalist society based in the community (or communities) of "free social individual[s]" (Marx, Grundrisse).

RAAN finds itself in full agreement with the above principles and definitions, and regards our continued use of the term "communism" in its true sense as being an attack on both the general capitalist order and the authoritarian elements of the "Left".

That said, we must reiterate that RAAN does not consider itself a "communist organization" anymore than it considers itself an "anarchist organization". RAAN supporters and "members" are feminists, (anti-state) Marxists, autonomists, councilists, anti-fascists, liberationists, situationists, and anarchists of all colors and (self-)classifications.

MARXISM

The essence of RAAN will never belong to any bearded philosopher of the past, but to the present-day militants whose actions give the network its life and physical existence.

While RAAN is not a "Marxist" organization *per se*, we do not write off Karl Marx as many in the past have irresponsibly done, and instead welcome all anti-state and libertarian Marxists as comrades in our struggle (note that several of the founding members of RAAN are self-described Marxists). The works of Marx continue to present us with a vital and comprehensive understanding of the world we live in.

"Although we are not a political party, we deem it impossible to achieve a social change without the future development of a revolutionary party: not any party, but the one expected in the Communist Manifesto. Such an organization cannot be 'established' or 'built', but it will spring from the clash of great forces pushed by the contradictions of capitalism itself. Deep economical and social upheavals, or even a general warfare, will make these enormous potentialities rise.

"The term 'party' does not mean a mere political structure, but the absolute antithesis of any organizing form so far expressed by class societies. According to Marx, the revolutionary concept of organization has to be consistent with the future of mankind, and not take old organizations as a model, even those which were actually revolutionary in the past." - The n+1 group

LENINISM

(and by extension, Trotskyism, Stalinism, Maoism, etc.)

"The working class is increasingly closed and compact internally, and searches within itself to articulate its ever greater unity in organization ... today the whole working class in struggle is the vanguard." - Toni Negri

If there have indeed been problems between communists and anarchists in the past, then Leninism has played no small part in fomenting them. True communists, who have always opposed hierarchies and the state, have long struggled to set the historical record straight in regards to the co-opting of Marx's "legacy" (and indeed, the very word *communism*!) by those who would wish to use it as a mask behind which to carry on with their statist and authoritarian schemes. As a result, we are committed to a full and uncompromising rejection of vanguardism.

As spelled out above, RAAN does not recognize Leninists as being communists, or even Marxists; but *the worst perverters of these tendencies*. In attempting to create true red and black (that is, communist and anarchist) unity, it is necessary to clearly exclude sundry authoritarians who may otherwise pose a threat to the original direction of the organization. RAAN is also committed towards upholding what we see as the true and original tradition of communism.

Over the course of writing this platform, several Leninists and Trotskyists (who had mistakenly joined the project thinking that RAAN would be accepting to their ideologies) attempted to hijack the process by injecting their particular bourgeois dogmas and historical falsifications into it. As a result of the ensuing debate, it became clear to us that, in dealing with red and anarchist unity, we would at all times have to be very specific as to what we defined as "red"; and even more so as to what we did *not* define as red. Therefore, this section has been expanded on in order to reflect this and make clear our positions towards those in the authoritarian Left.

Although some members of RAAN may hold sympathy for some of Lenin's ideas, the network will always remain free of both hierarchy and elitist vanguardism. We believe this to be the best defense against Leninism.

SMASH THE STATE!

We see arrayed before us the modern bourgeois state, supreme defender of the capitalist system. It coerces us into voting by promising that change is possible "from the inside", it imprisons and shoots us when we dare to rise against it, and most hideous of all, it ensures the sanctity of private property and authority by its very purpose and existence.

But the state is only a physical representation of the system of hierarchies we live under in everyday life. These hierarchies are themselves an extension of capitalism, since social relations of competition must inevitably force us into castes of rulers and ruled. Any critique of the capitalist system that fails to take this into account is destined either for failure or authoritarianism. All hierarchies, whether they are found in the workplace, the classroom, the political organization, or even (and especially) our personal relationships, must be dismantled if our "free association of human beings" is to take root.

Our new society will be driven by the cooperation and mutual aid of dedicated individuals, not the dictates of any "Proletarian" party, state, or other authoritative structure.

DEMOCRACY

(Or, on rejecting capitalist state democracy)

"...Being a communist cannot mean aspiring to capture the State and to substitute a new power which would be a just, fair power, the reasonable rational power of the communists - or of those using the name of communism - in contrast to the unjust power of the bourgeoisie. We do not work for the triumph of a new programme, that is, for the triumph of politics because the triumph of politics and with it the triumph of the State has already been realized before our very eyes - by the capitalist class." - M; The Communist Tendency in History

Democracy is the bourgeois principle of "citizenship" or the "general will", which denies class struggle and demands that all lawful members of society have an equal role in administration. It therefore assures the rule of the bourgeoisie, who, by the very fact of their existence, are economically, and therefore politically, dominant.

The fascist and liberal regimes, and all the variants in between, represent two parties within democracy, which differ only in terms of the strategies they employ in attacking and controlling the working class, and which become less and less in conflict as democracy is perfected. Proletarian struggle, because it necessarily rejects the interests and influence of the bourgeoisie and denies the myth of the classless "people", is anti-democratic and therefore criminal from a democratic standpoint; as such, it may be legally repressed in the most despotic fashion by the bourgeois state. Fetishization of democracy as a cure for state abuses is in fact a call for a more efficient, and more thoroughly oppressive, capitalism.

The organizational formalities of democracy, whereby the criteria for decisions is approval by constituents thrown together by the myth of citizenship, are fine-tuned towards allowing capitalism to operate with the express consent and collaboration of the working class. Democratic pluralism, which apparently allows previously oppressed constituencies to be represented in the state, in fact cloaks the fundamental class division of humanity. By designating proletarians as "citizens" on equal political footing with their masters, and culling their consent for class oppression, democracy is truly totalitarian.

After the destruction of the state, the bourgeoisie will no longer hold any political power. However, it will still exist, along with its influence over sectors of the proletariat. Bourgeois tendencies will be made manifest and must be denied freedom of propaganda and be excluded from the proletarian dictatorship. To call this "proletarian democracy" is simply meaningless; democracy is a principle originating from the bourgeois liberal tradition, which has always based itself on the abstraction of "the people".

Furthermore, the notion of a representative government transcendent from its subjects, whether it is to be composed of multiple bourgeois parties or a single "workers' party", is a bourgeois one. No militants are capable of applying the revolutionary programme in all aspects, and therefore leading others, without being fully accountable to the collective organism of the revolution. As such, their role must be considered transitory and subject to replacement at any time.

Liberals have often called for a participatorially-run democracy. This does not provide any solution. "Self-management" is perfectly compatible with capitalism - the bosses would love nothing more than for workers to voluntarily labor without the presence of managers or police.

The fetishization of decision-making process is rooted in liberal doctrine. What really matters is not how the decisions are made so much as what decisions are made, and who is making them. The inclusion of ruling-class elements in decisions means that the decision will be in favor of those elements. This is what Marx meant when he asserted the need for *proletarian dictatorship*, a term from which we do not shy.

ANTI-RACISM

Racism and its historical accomplice, nationalism, have been carefully developed to a point where they can be engineered and manipulated to cause workers around the world and even in the same country to fight each other over the scraps of power thrown to them by the bourgeoisie. Such artificial divisions in the proletariat are always to the benefit of the capitalist system that is ultimately at fault for creating these tensions.

Racism as an institution has existed for so long at the behest of class society that it now permeates nearly every social relation we undertake. Activist circles have historically been anything but immune to this tendency, in which racism can manifest itself subtly, often in the form of patronizing attempts to "help", or the subconscious disregarding of white privilege.

RAAN is a radical multi-racial, multi-national network founded and run off a continuing discussion driven by its membership. We must ensure that this discussion covers and confronts all forms of oppression, especially those embedded in both our own revolutionary organizations and everyday lives.

We seek two things: firstly, to support and organize with workers who have been specifically oppressed as a result of their skin color, or nationality, and agitate towards their autonomous empowerment to fight back. Secondly, we seek to unite all workers, irrespective of race and nationality, towards a worldwide revolution that will finally smash forever the institutions of white supremacy, racism, and nationalism.

ANTI-SEXISM

RAAN rejects the blatant as well as underlying patriarchy of bourgeois existence as a fundamental pillar upon which this oppressive society rests, and strives to destroy it through an understanding of the historical forces that have caused it to be. This is not to say that we subscribe to the reactionary ideal that patriarchy will be destroyed the moment our relations cease to be mediated by property. Systems of domination have existed before primitive accumulation, and will continue to haunt us after the fall of capital, unless specific attention is paid to the way that they appear, even in revolutionary societies and situations.

As anarchists and communists, we also reject the traditional concepts, appearances, and roles of "gender" (while the existence of gender isn't bad, the way it is enforced by the hegemony *is*). The sexualist oppression exerted over us by capitalism does not only affect half of humanity, but all of us simultaneously. We are feminists, yes. But this does not limit our struggle to that for the liberation of women. Freedom from sexism involves dismantling the assigned roles forced upon every member of humanity.

QUEER LIBERATION

Inseparable from our struggle towards the abolition of sexism and gender roles is the inherent freedom from sexual categorization that these victories will bring.

We will *not* live our lives within the boundaries of "the" preordained sexuality, set down for us by Christian (or Jewish, or Muslim) morality. We seize the chance to associate in revolutionary communities free from the cages of race, class, and sex; and in so doing, to pursue our true natures and individual desires in a world where homophobia and heterocentrism have ceased to exist not because we have abolished them, but because they have lost all meaning.

ENVIRONMENTALISM

In a system based on private property, competition creates ever-expanding markets, making non-sustainable consumption of the earth's resources a necessity for survival. The social relations under which we live have made it impossible for us to exist, at least for any substantial amount of time, in any sort of harmony with the earth.

Anthropocentrism has long been the cause of human alienation from the rest of the world. This belief that humans are the center of the universe is killing the earth and must be stopped at all costs. The hierarchy of life that we have created, which holds humans to be grander than all else, is no different (and indeed, in no way separate) from the political and economic hierarchies which the ruling-class has created to maintain its power. We must learn to understand that all life is connected and therefore, all equal.

ANIMAL LIBERATION & VEGANISM

Developed capitalism has held a practice of malice reductionism. This goes from the basic pre-capitalist urban-feudal tandem economies to the present day globalized economy, turning from the most flagrant abuse of power to the least perturbing. The greatest cruelty that has remained unstripped in this streak is that towards animals.

Capital was born on the backs of the most exploited labor, from indentured servants to slaves. This, for the most part, has ended today, but still exists in groups external to humans. The cause for discrepancies between proletarians and animals is capital's utilization of class infighting to draw attention away from itself. In a society that methodically oppresses animals, workers have been forced to choose between taking part (and thus creating another division in the oppressed), or refusing to buy into the exploitative process (which is then often seen as

betrayal of their own class). This fine-tuned system of infighting is directly parallel to the subdivisions within the working class that are given elevated status closer to the bourgeoisie.

The liberation of animals is necessary in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. To venture to use animals is to stimulate overproduction, an unstable economy, and disaster with which to further exploit and manipulate the already exploited and manipulated. The unsaid reasoning for the enslavement of animals is that of production, accumulation, and profit. Be it not that we support animal and ecological liberation out of ethic, then be it for mutual benefit.

RAAN supports and encourages all those who have made efforts towards matching their lifestyles with their revolutionary goals (that is, those who have refused to take part in the horrific system of animal consumption). However, we recognize that only a social revolution can dismantle the systematic murder and torture of all animal life, and that in itself the lifestyle choice of veganism is not revolutionary. RAAN also supports all attacks on the meat industry, which represents one of the most brutal and exploitative sectors of the capitalist system.

Extended analysis of the consumption of animals, how it fits into the historical process of capitalist development, and why factory farming must be eliminated in order to ensure that all humans can be fed in an environmentally-sustainable way can be found in the Antagonism Press pamphlet *Capitalism · Animals · Communism*, available for free at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909/beasts/index.html>

All of this should **not** be taken to mean that RAAN is made up entirely of vegans, or that only vegans are welcome in it. To elaborate further upon this, we'll quote from the above pamphlet:

"In some areas there may be apparent contradictions. For instance in Brazil, landless laborers are occupying land belonging to big landowners and cultivating it, including rearing animals. This is an expression of the communist movement too. But the communist movement is not a monolithic entity united around a party line. It is a dynamic entity composed of diverse, and sometimes contradictory efforts. There are many issues on which a range of different positions are possible - for instance the use of technology.

"Disagreements would continue even in the society that would emerge as the communist movement developed to a stage where capitalism was in the process of being abolished across large parts of the world. Communism is not the application of a universal moral code, or the creation of a uniform society, and there would be no state or similar mechanism to impose, say, veganism, even if many people thought it desirable. The question of how to live with animals might be resolved in different ways in different times and places. The animal liberation movement would form one pole of the debate.

"Others might take a different position, arguing perhaps for free range, non-intensive domestication of the goat in the garden variety (although this apparent idyll would probably still have to involve cruel practices like castration and the separation of animals from their social units).

"We can say with confidence though that the status quo would be untenable, and that there would be a radical transformation of the relations between humans and other species."

PROTECTION OF THE EARTH

As anti-state communists and anarchists, we fully understand that in order to shape a free world, we must save it from those who seek to destroy it for selfish capitalistic gain. We acknowledge that the working class are not the only ones to feel the pains of exploitation, for this very earth that we all live and work on is being destroyed by the few for their own personal profit.

Forests are logged by private businesses and governments, who proceed to sell the earth itself to the highest bidder. Rivers are dammed and polluted for the purpose of selling power to the masses. And who are these people who, in their arrogance, feel that it is *their* hegemonic right to divide the earth and divvy out its resources? They are of the same class that feels it their right in "the natural order of things" to exploit the underprivileged. The environment, the animals, the workers - all are victims of oppression, and yet it is all that play a vital role on this earth. It is necessary that we reject capitalist morality along with its anthropocentric fallacy and learn to appreciate *all* life.

A necessary part of the liberation of the working class and oppressed animal species is the liberation of the eco-system. The relationship of the aforementioned groups to the Earth is an inseparable symbiosis. For a communist society to choose only parasite and not also host is to subscribe to the capitalist and pre-capitalist notion of disasters and tragedies as unsaid but "necessary" evils for the benefit of the ruling-class. Capitalism will still exist under the charade of a socio-economically libertarian society, and mankind will collapse under the arrogance of its own accumulation.

We are all inhabitants of this earth. When a forest is clear-cut, it affects us all. When a factory spews poisonous chemicals into the air - it is us who are harmed. It is beyond essential that we not mimic the actions of the capitalist class in our libertarian revolution. It is necessary that we protect the earth from the ruling-class who seeks to destroy it - for the planet, and for ourselves.

It is for these reasons that RAAN fully supports all defenders of the environment; all those individuals and groups who promote earth liberation through means of civil disobedience, direct action, and education. As with all other topics discussed in this pamphlet, we must emphasize that our devotion to the liberation of the earth is not merely an ideological detail, but a vital and most central tenet of our organization.

CHILDREN'S LIBERATION

This world is the free space of all who inhabit it, and not merely those who are adults. Think about the chairs we sit in; designed to accommodate only fully-grown humans, and think about the language we use when we tell someone they are "acting childish". What's so wrong about acting like a child? Does this mean there is something wrong with *being* a child?

No, of course not. But that significant portion of our lives, childhood, is spent under the direct control of our parent(s), our teachers, and our environments. How damaging is it that in the most developmentally crucial time of our lives, we are often treated as property? Is it any wonder why most of us are so willing to passively accept the adult role of a wage slave? Rather than seeking to direct and control the development of our children, adults should provide a guiding and nurturing hand to a free and natural development. Rather than being trapped under the jurisdiction of their parent(s), children should be seen as part of the greater community, and the responsibility of accompanying them into adulthood, a common one.

Building and developing a free society means treating everyone with respect regardless of age, size, or assumed intellect. It means giving equal opportunity for all to exist in a world that will be partly of their own making. It also means destroying what is arguably the single most oppressive force in any child's life: school.

EDUCATION VS SCHOOLING

Institutionalized "education", both in the government and private sectors, is inextricably tied to the capitalist system. Indeed its chief function remains, as always, to feed and perpetuate that system by grooming its children for membership in their assigned class. An anti-capitalist development will do away with all forms of enforced schooling, freeing us to seek knowledge not towards vocational, but personal goals.

We believe that everyone should have free and unlimited access to information and essential education such as the skills to read and write. We stand for the abolition of the boring, standardized indoctrination that passes for learning these days. We want to see the buildings where we used to be made to attend school turned into vast community centers full of spontaneous workshops and debate, and we want the only papers we write to be those that make us jump out of bed in the middle of the night, delirious with inspiration!

Such aspirations may seem utopian at best when it is taken into account that around the world, many of us still struggle for even the most basic standard of bourgeois education. These struggles cannot, of course, be forgotten or de-legitimized.

We are confident in our inherent ability to educate each other and ourselves through the course of natural human interactions and a shared pool of knowledge. Not only will this be healthier for us, but (in all seriousness) it will also be a hell of a lot more fun. Just imagine, sharing ideas and dreams with your friends and companions, instead of sitting in artificial rows with classmates, constantly reminded by an authoritative figure that you are not allowed to interact...

Although these ideas have been placed under "Children's Liberation", it is important to remember that finding new means and processes by which to educate ourselves, independent of both the state and the bourgeoisie, is the common task of all revolutionaries, and as a result will also be of benefit and use to everyone, regardless of age.

INTERNATIONALISM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM

"[One way to help us] ...Is to know or learn that the struggle of Zapatismo is only a symptom of a worldwide struggle that exists of the excluded groups to recuperate their place in history and that all these people, men and women, that are in other parts of the world that struggle within their nations and within their social groups, demand also to take back the place that they deserve in the modern world." - Subcomandante Marcos (EZLN)

Because labor power is exploited from the proletariat, workers will never be able to buy back all that they as a class have produced. This chronic overproduction is an organic flaw in the capitalist system, which the bourgeoisie will try to ameliorate by spreading markets overseas. Simultaneously, that same capitalist class will be on an eternal search for the lowest wages and biggest profits in the world.

Thus, trade disputes and even wars between nations are simply part of the process that makes up the "healthy functioning" of capitalism. Even the so-called "Communist" nations of the past have revealed their imperialist nature in response to the need for expanding markets. Where a stronger capitalist nation subdues a militarily weaker one, (either politically or economically) it is called imperialism. When the former (or future!) ruling-classes of that weaker power take back control, it is not "national liberation" but *inter-imperialism*.

The Red & Anarchist Action Network is an internationalist organization, and opposes the notion of borders, nations, and all forms of imperialism, especially those in which the bourgeoisie disguises itself behind the veil of a "popular movement". Furthermore, we must not become enamored and hypnotized by struggles in faraway places, as we have a revolution to fight for right here! This is as true to a worker in New York as it is to one in Sao Paulo, or Paris, or Johannesburg, etc.

We must maintain and express solidarity with our comrades across the globe, yes. But the most helpful thing we can do for them, and ourselves, is not to distribute flyers about their struggles, but to enhance and push forward with our own; as they are all ultimately pieces of the same historical process. Where capitalism in its most developed forms prevails, the old Left continues to "live" vicariously through the movements of oppressed workers in the global South. This is a trap that we must avoid at all costs. We fully understand the need to learn from how our movement reacts to capitalism in different parts of the world, but even the most detailed analysis will be useless unless we make the revolution relevant and active in our own everyday lives.

ON LABOR UNIONS

"We want the unions to be influenced by the anarchists, syndicalism to have a clear goal, the economic conception of the anarchist communists, but the anarchists should not conduct themselves like commanders from organizations outside the unions, imposing themselves on the unions as though the unions owed their existence to the anarchists. They should bring their revolutionary values and effectiveness to the unions." - Juan Peiro

While still fetishized in some circles as the ultimate expression of working class power, even the mere concept of the labor union has become yet another addition to the grand capitalist structure. Far from being the fighting organs of the proletariat that they had once been, unions serve now only as the clumsiest of mediators between the working class and those who own the means of production.

Weighted down by bureaucracy and internal hierarchies, unions exist well within the sphere of bourgeois law, often acting as another system of control over the heads of the oppressed. This is made all the worse by the fact that, like the vote, capitalist trade unions provide the illusion of power and representation, while at the same time strengthening the bourgeois order by recognizing it as a legitimate force to be negotiated with. Nevertheless, unions have been and remain almost the single greatest single expression of class-consciousness. Though we recognize the flaws and authoritarian nature of top-down unions, it would be a fatal mistake for us to completely ignore or reject these "workers' organizations".

We must be clear in our analysis: it is not the union that makes us strong, but the self-consciousness of the proletariat as a class entirely independent and with wholly different interests than those of the ruling-class.

Any situation where involvement in a labor union may accelerate such a realization of class-consciousness is welcome. Because unions are capable of bettering the lives of workers, they must be supported in their struggles against the bosses. However, the ultimate goal towards which we strive is organization and consciousness along *class*, not union, lines.

Furthermore, it must be clear at all times to both the organizer and to the unionized workers that the union is only a vehicle through which to attain this organization, and that the logical result of said organization can only be the dissolution of the union, replaced by a fighting mass of workers who will then be quite capable of representing themselves.

The question of our involvement in labor unions is one that must be taken up individually in each unique situation. RAAN takes its cue in this from the Worker's Solidarity Movement (WSM) of Ireland, which states in its position paper;

"The rank and file movement is that movement within the unions of militant workers who are prepared to fight independently of the bureaucracy, and against it when necessary. Such a movement arises when workers go into struggle and are attacked not only by the boss but also by their own union officials. It requires the confidence to fight on both these fronts, and to be generalized to the degree where it can appeal for solidarity action over the heads of the bureaucrats.

"Within the rank & file movement we fight for our politics, we never hide them. But we do not want to take over, the movement should be independent of any one political organization. While we seek to convince as many workers as possible of the need for anarchism, we do not do this in an opportunist manner at the expense of the growth of the movement. It should never be made a front belonging to the revolutionary organization. Its role is to provide a focus for workers moving to the left and wanting to fight.

"Rank-and-file movements usually come about as a result of struggle - when workers see that the union leadership is an impediment to that struggle. They cannot be willed into existence. The establishment of solidarity networks can in the meantime draw people together on a limited agenda where issues of democracy, strategies for the future etc. can be discussed. We seek to build solidarity networks where possible, as the first step towards the building of rank-and-file movements." (Quoted from <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ppapers/unions.html>)

We believe that our involvement in unions, and the corresponding struggle towards the creation of such rank-and-file movements, is essential to the class struggle.

PERSONAL LIBERATION

As dictated by the bourgeoisie, working class upbringings alienate people from the basic facts about the world around them and keep them from the tools that would allow them to assert themselves against the capitalist world. A fundamental part of being human is the chance to gain an understanding of the world, and of the self, and to use that knowledge as a base from which to pursue the limits of one's own potential.

This, in turn, can only be realized if a person has a degree of autonomy over the material parts of her or his life, meaning having freedom for self-determination in the economic sphere as well.

Personal liberation, a unique process for each human being, can nevertheless be broken down into two categories: mental liberation, which includes deprogramming, unschooling, self-directed education, and ends with autonomous individuals prepared to pursue whatever future mental life they so desire; and material liberation, which includes freedom from the traditional roles that capitalism forces us into, as well as the pursuit of lives which are less dominated by capitalism as a whole. Material liberation ideally ends with economic autonomy in the form of self-control over one's lifestyle and work.

This is not to say that we subscribe to the oppressive capitalist notion of mind/body dualism, (the idea that the mind and body function without interchange). Even if we approach mental and material liberation separately, they are in fact one and the same, each impossible without the other.

It is also recognized that cultures supporting liberation already exist. These should be supported and expanded in all cases as essential to both personal liberation and long-term goals. Bourgeois youth pursuing personal liberation should be supported if they endorse anarchist-communism as defined in these principles, and are willing to undertake some "class suicide" by sacrificing parts of the bourgeois lifestyle for an anti-capitalist one.

While the path to liberation can only be determined by the persons themselves, a few guidelines can be drawn up for what is *not* liberation. Two major examples of what is not liberation exist:

- 1) Drug and crime "cultures" where casual drug use and petty crime turn into addictive and socially destructive lifestyles. We should add that such problems do not actually constitute separate cultures of their own, but extend beyond all cultures and are inextricably linked to material conditions.
- 2) Bourgeois cultures. The goal of personal liberation should not be to become a "little" bourgeois, or even "more" proletarian, but to transcend all societal roles imposed on us by capitalism and class societies.

We strive to strike a middle path, which takes us beyond the working class in some respects, and keeps us rooted to it in others.

These cultures of liberation are facilitated by mutual aid in the form of both personal aid and community centers, squats, community education programs, discussion groups and infoshops, all of which should be supported and enlarged, as should the culture in general.

Liberation is not just for youths. Often, groups of adults will be empowered by community organizing around an external issue and then go on to pursue personal liberation. Efforts that empower adults in regards to community as well as popular education should be supported. The culture of mutual aid that arises from such ventures should, again, be endorsed and supported in all cases.

The things that facilitate liberation in youth communities, such as community centers, squats, infoshops, and community action groups, also apply to adults, and so should not be overlooked, as they are relevant to all layers of society. For example: Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) squats to protest the housing crisis, a tactic which started out with punk youth, is now being used to empower people squeezed out of the housing market by capitalism.

In people's quests for liberation, there exists the possibility of realizing in part the kind of society that we hope will one day predominate. It should be recognized that although liberation can be pursued by anyone, that the most productive and needed form of liberation is that which workers pursue, and that this future society would fundamentally be a proletarian society, although not in any capitalist sense of the term.

This fits into the idea of an autonomous communist development in that when alternative cultures are successful, they promote a combination of brainwork and manual work, contributing to a more well-rounded person than that which capitalism produces. They also introduce lifestyles that promote work that is more meaningful to the community and to the individual, while freeing said individual to pursue personal interests and express his or her deepest creativities. Such a development also combines a culture of solidarity with respect for individual pursuits. Finally, any personal liberation is a strike against capitalism and makes projects with more systemic changes in mind easier to accomplish.

ACTION

(and an end to the boredom of the so-called Left)

For too long have left-wing ideas remained isolated in the dark prisons of traditional "activism". Far too many organizations claiming to represent a revolutionary tendency have never engaged in anything more revolutionary than the distribution of their own Party literature.

The Red & Anarchist Action Network embraces at its core a true diversity and freedom of tactics. The absence of a "Revolutionary Programme" leaves the question of accepted strategy and action to the membership itself.

At the same time, we must be clear in our rejection of unscrupulous methods; that is, actions which may bring the very existence of the Network into jeopardy. But in a world where the instruments of repression are so varied, both visible and invisible, only a fluid movement of free-thinking and autonomous individuals can truly effect any level of change in the basic functions of our society, not to mention in their everyday lives. RAAN provides those individuals with the tools and contacts that may be necessary for the accomplishment of these changes. Furthermore, it establishes a common bond with other radical anti-capitalists, through which all may benefit.

Members of the network are encouraged to involve themselves in a variety of activities that they feel to be fulfilling towards their political consciousness (and more importantly, their immediate lives). RAAN activists have achieved this in a variety of ways. Some have begun work with visionary projects such as Food Not Bombs or the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, in which they serve as representatives of the network. Others have concentrated their attention towards their own lives, devising ways to live without either money or waged labor, so that they can then lead a freer existence, and present a more all-encompassing attack on the capitalist system.

But it has been where RAAN members have come together to create projects in the name of the organization itself that the most promising results have been shown. At the time of this writing, RAAN has supported imprisoned Earth First! activists, concocted spontaneous street dances, crashed Trotskyist recruiting drives, and made hundreds of radical books available for free online.

Instead of dealing solely with organization and the modes of discourse involved in interfacing with the powers that assume themselves to be, we choose to focus instead on material gains in the fields of alternative institutions that have a tangible presence in our communities and yet are completely independent of organizations which already impose themselves so much on the community that we feel obliged to enter their arena before constructing our own.

We confess to the *intentional* vagueness of these ideas, but feel that not only would it be impossible for a group such as ours to produce a general action programme at this stage, but that it would in fact be counterproductive. As we grow, each member and regional collective in RAAN will be able to decide what are the best uses of its resources. We see nothing more hopeful and exciting then to leave the development of the network to the individuals who will, by participating in it, give it life.

The revolutionary ideals proclaimed by the network serve only as the underlying current, and not as a rigid path, in the lives of our members. For those who find themselves in agreement with these *Principles and Direction*, RAAN presents itself as a vehicle through which to physically manifest your ideas for a wholly different and better world.

CONCLUSION

We are a loose organization of freethinking individuals. We have no intention of this pamphlet serving as a strict set of rules for this network to follow, but merely a guide for us on our path towards liberation. As the title states, these are merely our basic principles and the direction we seek to follow to obtain these ends.

When Nachie and I thought of forming this network, we saw so much potential from the left, along with the Internet as a means of organizing it. There are so many collectives, leftist organizations, and other anti-capitalist circles that are plugged into the web that it made no sense to not utilize it as a tool for us to come together and support one another. In no way do we want to replace the vast array of groups that we all belong to on a local level. Rather, we wish for RAAN to become a tool of these groups, as well as the individuals involved in them. Together, utilizing our collective strength and our collective resources, we can accomplish so much more.

By coming together to aid one another in our personal struggles, we create lasting bonds that span cities, states, provinces, and whole nations. And what better way to create a unified libertarian left than through mutual aid - as opposed to empty words and empty promises. This direct participation with one another cements these bonds - for actions shall always speak louder than words.

And when these bonds become strong enough, the potential for collective action comes to the forefront. This collective action shall no longer be diseased by distrust for one another. No longer shall a green anarchist be looking over his/her shoulder at a self-affirmed Marxist (or vice versa), because the bridge of trust has already been put in place by their direct support for one another.

In short, it is time for us to put aside our petty differences and look at our common enemy, and our common goal, through the same eyes. The vagueness of much of this pamphlet was purposeful as it reflects the diverse beliefs of our members.

We are artists and we are dancers. We are students and we are dropouts. We are hoboes and we are inventors. We are urban explorers and we are tree huggers. We are lovers, farmers, revolutionaries and curious children. Our diversity is our strength, not a weakness. But only together can we take the steps to make a lasting positive change in our world.

- Matthew Brehe
Co-founder of RAAN

"A revolution is an act of sovereign justice, in the order of moral facts, springing out of the necessity of things, and in consequence carrying with it its own justification" - Proudhon